

*Brothers to the End*

John Wesley

John and Charles Wesley were bound together not only by blood, but by a common experience of grace, and shared leadership in the evangelical revival of the 18th century. Charles became the great lyricist, and John the great administrator, of the Methodist movement. They often disagreed, and their relationship was sometimes strained, such as when Charles helped undermine John's budding relationship with Grace Murray, who might have made Father John a good wife; or later in 1784 when John's decision to ordain men to establish American Methodism as an autonomous church infuriated Charles, the loyal churchman. Yet they remained close; when Charles Wesley died on March 29, 1788 in London at age 80, his brother did not learn of the news for nearly a week, and neither his journal nor his initial correspondence to his bereaved sister-in-law betrays much emotion. Yet a few weeks after Charles' death, John was leading a service in Bolton, when he attempted to lead the congregation in singing Charles' hymn, "Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown." When he came to the verse

My company before is gone,  
And I am left alone with Thee,

John was overcome with emotion, and sat down to weep. The singing ceased until he could retain his composure. John outlived his brother by barely three years, dying in March 1791 at the age of 87.